

House of the Year 2024 shortlist: The Hall

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A coherent design narrative weaves together old and new in TaylorHare's restored, sustainable home-for-life



A new extension to the main house replaces unsympathetic additions. Credit: Building Narratives

Adjacent to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the Kent Downs, this Grade II*-listed 16th century house with Grade II-listed barns and outbuildings had become tumbledown and been unsympathetically modified over the years. The client wanted to revive and transform the estate into a sustainable home-for-life while enhancing its forgotten character. TaylorHare Architects achieved this with finesse, reinstating a coherent design narrative and harmoniously weaving together old and new.

A spacious extension to the north-east of the main house replaces piecemeal 20th century additions. This, and a repaired cluster of outbuildings, surround a bucolic grassy courtyard. A new barn stores agricultural equipment and provides a roost site for bats.



Internally, a natural appearance was reinstated, with a focus on honest, handcrafted, high-quality materials. In the long barn original brickwork and a ragstone wall have been exposed, and repaired English oak beams frame the space. A new polished concrete staircase, with a bespoke iron handrail made by a local blacksmith, elegantly connects the ground to the upper level and incorporates a fluted ash kitchenette. It is an ensemble of careful restoration and sophisticated contemporary refreshes.



Careful restoration complements contemporary updates throughout. Credit: Building Narratives

A good sustainability strategy effectively reconciled with the historic site to achieve modern green living, sympathetic to the setting. Measures such as zoned underfloor heating, smart lighting, slimline double-glazing and a water-source heat pump system in a new lake, have contributed to the buildings' energy efficiency. The scheme took a holistic, considered approach to landscape and ecological enhancement alongside the works to the buildings.

The jury reflected that the buildings have been 'given a new lease of life' and praised the architect's sensitive approach: 'The project brings together traditional craftsmanship and 21st century appeal in a modern family home. The key success lies in its masterful combining of old and new, enhancing and restoring what was already there, while producing an addition that befits both its context and its clients' daily needs.'



Original brickwork and a ragstone wall are exposed in the long barn. Credit: Building Narratives

Internally, there is a focus on high quality materials and craftsmanship. Credit: Building Narratives

What is your favourite feature of the house?

Christopher Taylor Reinstating, repairing and internally exposing the timber roofs of the main house was a labour of love.

Removing the 1960s plasterboard false ceilings, which previously concealed dark, uninviting, irregular spaces above, allowed for an unexpected change in volume and atmosphere from those of the floors below. An oversized rooftop adds drama as it filters light down through the house via the restored secondary staircase.

That sense of the unexpected in a home with a familiar appearance heightens the focus on craftsmanship which, interwoven with natural materials, lends distinguished yet warm domesticity.

What was the greatest challenge?

When we first visited, most if not all the original heavily timbered and ornamented interior had been lost. The challenge was to create a home that would enhance and restore this forgotten character without being pastiche or ordinary.

We could have easily added a contemporary extension, as a clear delineation of new against old, but chose a more discreet and inventive approach which required careful understanding of the house's history. We wanted the project to sensitively marry the old with the new, where the works undertaken feel almost invisible, as if they have always been there.



Slimline double-glazing has significantly improved thermal efficiency. Credit: Building Narratives

What lessons from the project could be applied elsewhere?

Buildings of historical importance and sustainable construction are too often considered to be poles apart. However, the use of a renewable water-source heat pump removed the need for conventional radiators, helping restore rooms to their original character without compromising thermal performance.

While a significant investment, the system should pay back in less than 10 years and will generate its own energy for many years to come. We believe The Hall provides a viable prototype for incorporating green technology into similar historic buildings and creating low impact, sustainable and carefully restored homes.

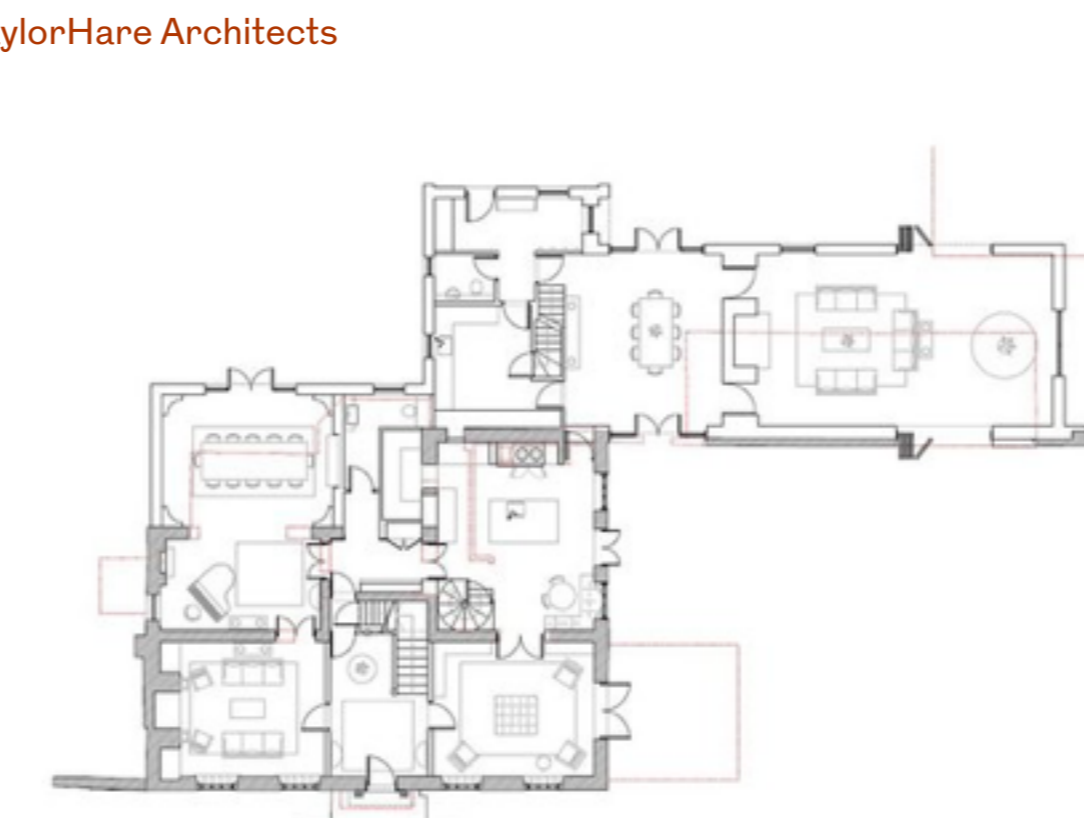
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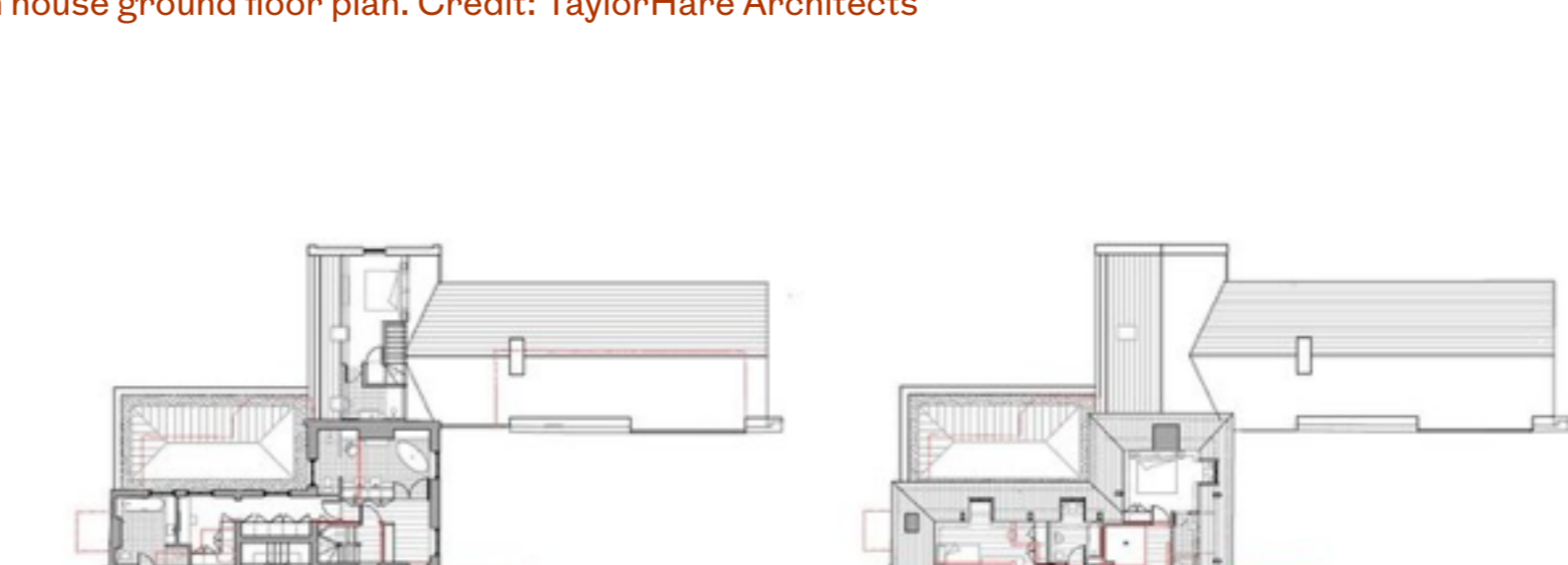
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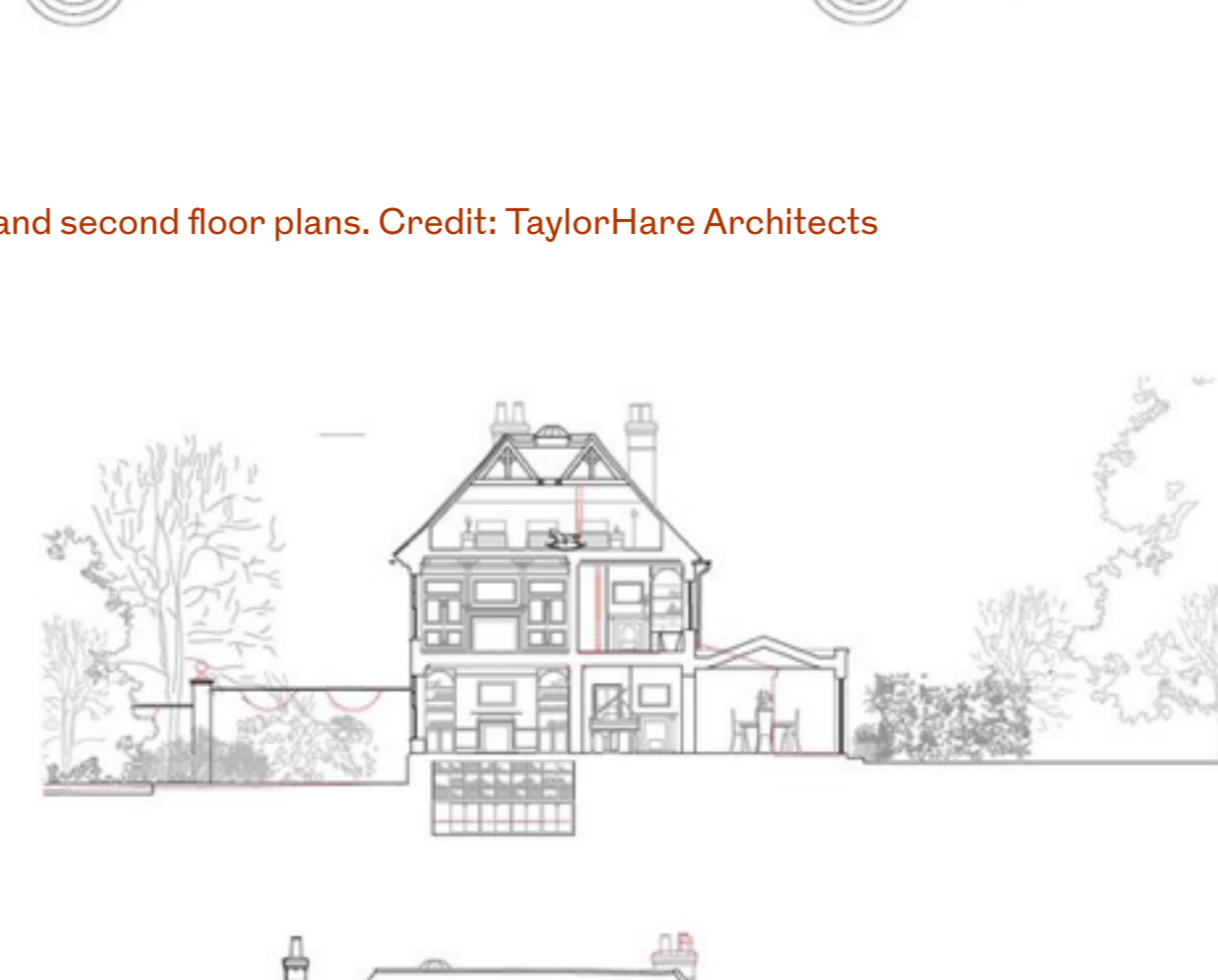
Site plan. Credit: TaylorHare Architects



Main house ground floor plan. Credit: TaylorHare Architects



Main house first and second floor plans. Credit: TaylorHare Architects



Sections. Credit: TaylorHare Architects

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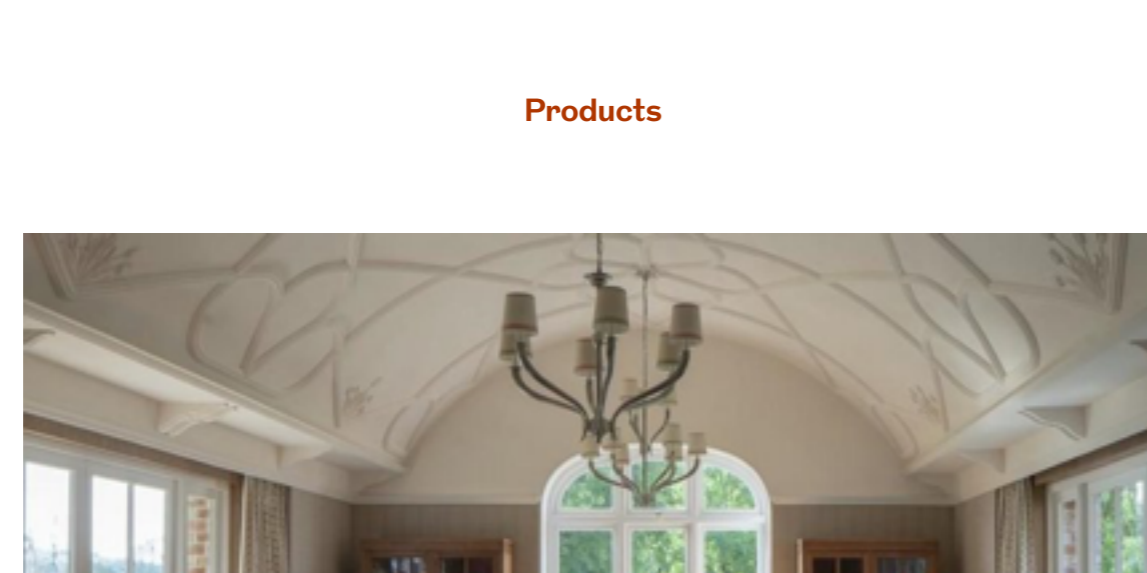


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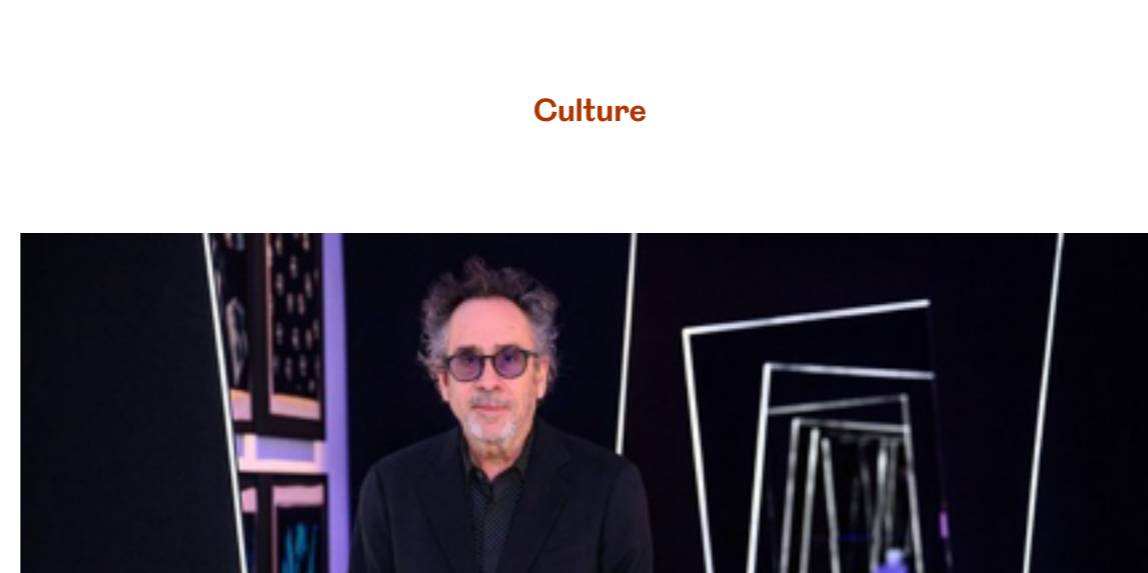
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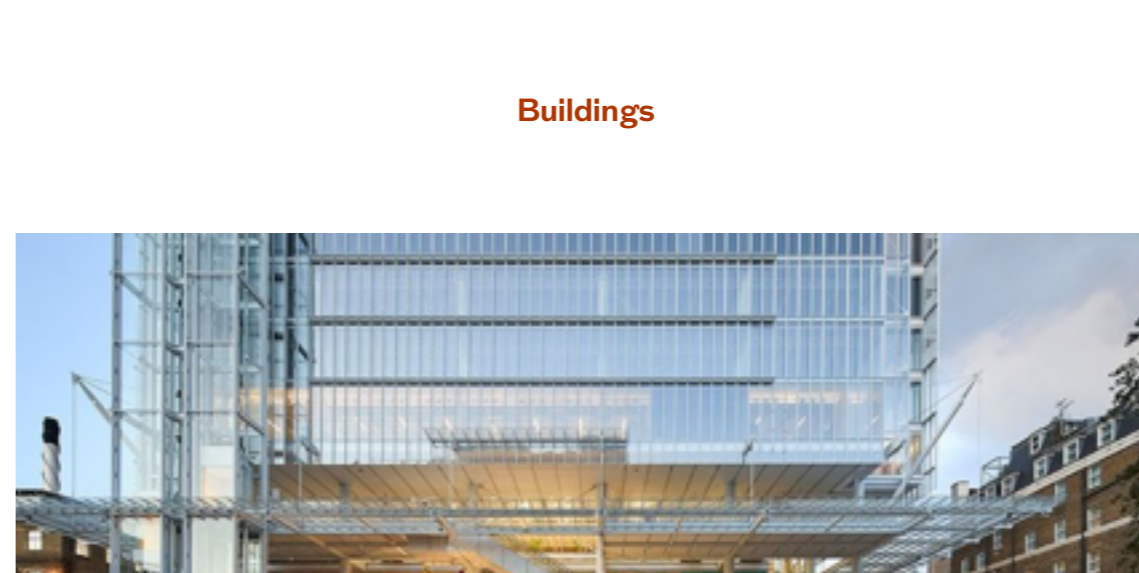


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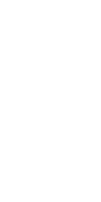
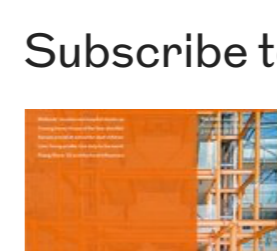
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